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SPOTLIGHT
DOUBLEDEALER
REVELATION:
PART THREE

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SPOTLIGHT
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REVELATION:
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DEALER is all inner and outer self: show one face to the world and hide the true one. Let no one in. Be an island, self-supportive, and insular. Incredibly clever and manipulative (Double) DEALER will smile at your face and stab you in the back. Often for self-advancement or material rewards but sometimes just because he can! It reinforces the belief that he is utterly superior to those around him, better, smarter, more cunning. The war is a means to end, faction for fools, friendship artifice. But sometimes a deception can be so good… you can even fool yourself.

THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: DOUBLEDEALER

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REVELATION

Following loss of sleeper agent NIGHTBEAT on Gorlam Prime, NEMESIS PRIME and his fellow Dead Universe denizens—JHIAXUS, GALVATRON, STRAXUS, CYCLONUS, and GRINDCORE—prepare to cross over/return to the core universe they once inhabited, initiating a catastrophic chain of events known as The Expansion. Meanwhile, with OPTIMUS PRIME and JETFIRE struggling to comprehend the looming apocalypse, DEALER seeks out hard and fast answers in the form of the all-seeing, all-knowing Magnificence, an artifact of great power and dark secrets, hidden from one and all by HOT ROD…

PHASE FOUR CONTINUES…

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Special thanks to Hasbro's Aaron Archer, Michael Kelly, Sheri Lucci, Richard Zambarano, Jared Jones, Michael Provost, Michael Richie, and Michael Verrecchia for their invaluable assistance.

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"SO MANY QUESTIONS..."
"...WHO REACTIVATED THUNDERWING AND WHAT IS IT HE'S GUARDING ON CORATA-VAZ?"
"WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO NOVA PRIME, JHIAXUS, AND THE OTHERS ABOARD THE FIRST ARK?"
"WHY DOES THEIR VERY TOUCH NOW MEAN CERTAIN DEATH?"
"HOW MANY MORE ARE THERE? WHAT ARE THEIR INTENTIONS?"
"AND WHAT EXACTLY IS GOING ON OUT THERE IN THE BENZULI EXPANSE?"
"SO MANY QUESTIONS... AND NO ANSWERS."

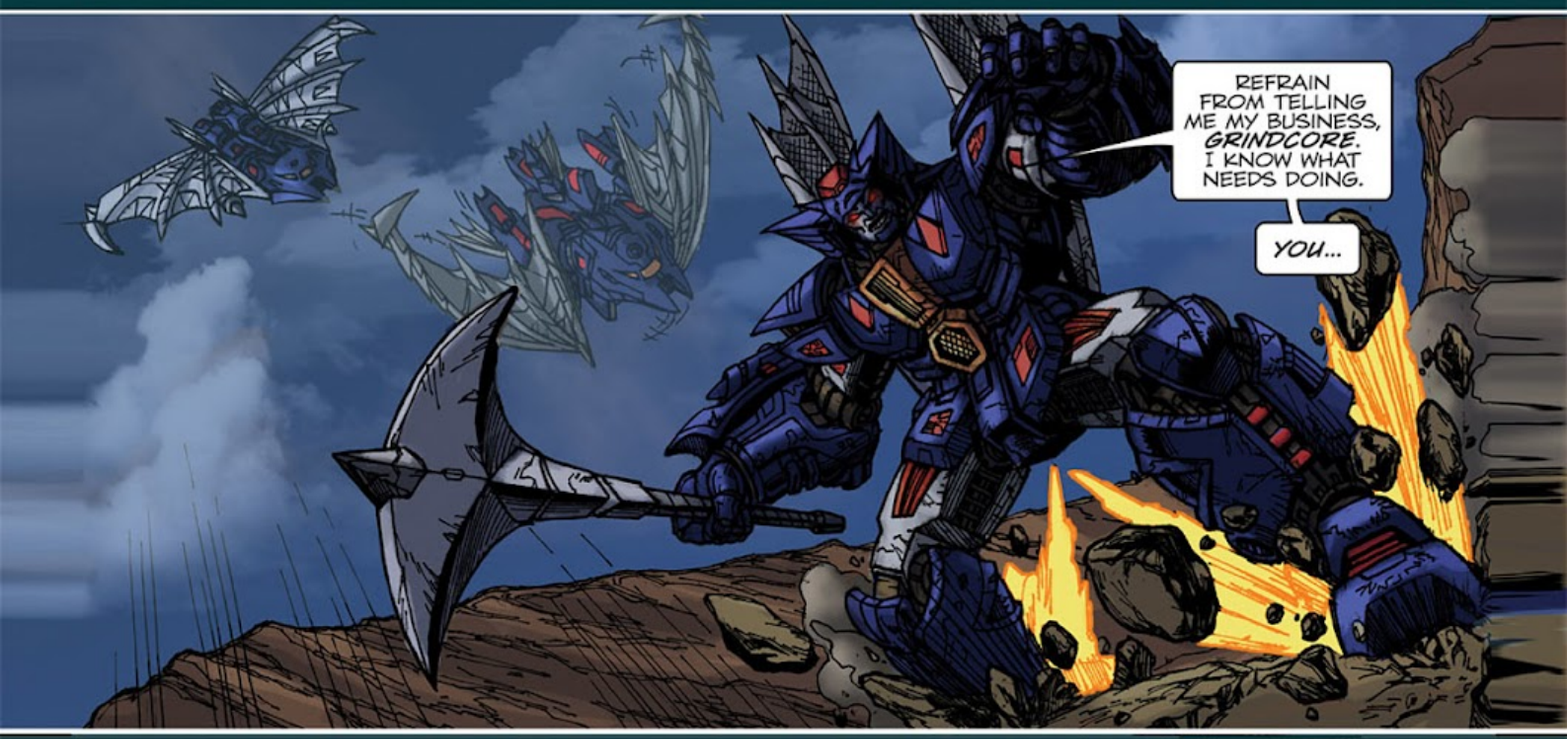
TAMPA, FLORIDA:
WHICH IS WHY WE NEED THE MAGNIFICENCE.
"FONT OF ALL KNOWLEDGE, KNOWN AND UNKNOWN," EH? THING IS, DEALER, WE DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE MAGNIFICENCE TO PRESUME IT'LL JUST COUGH UP THE RELEVANT INFORMATION.
AND, WELL, IF IT ENDED UP IN THE WRONG HANDS, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT ELSE MAY ENSUE!
HEY, I AGREE WITH YOU, HOT ROD, BUT THIS COMES DIRECT FROM OPTIMUS PRIME.
UM. WHAT HAPPENED HERE ANYWAY?
IT'S CALLED A HEADMASTER.
AND THIS, IT SEEMS, IS THE PRICE OF FAILURE!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THOUGH, IT'S A DEAD END. I'M STILL NO CLOSER TO FINDING SUNSTREAKER.
AHEM.
SEEMS YOU NEED THE MAGNIFICENCE TOO.

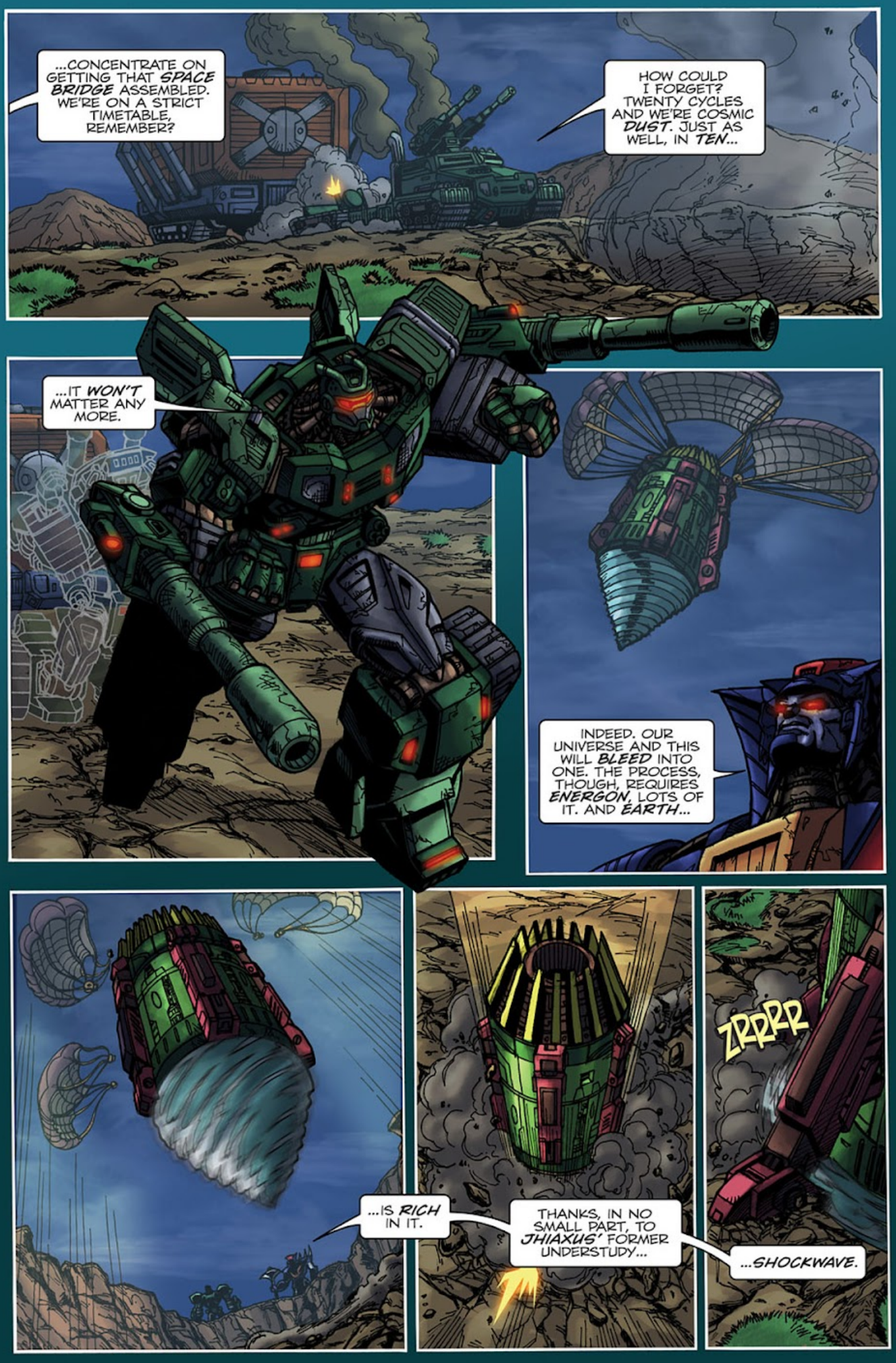
HEHN.
YOU, ME, THE MAGNIFICENCE. IT'S AS IF THINGS HAVE COME FULL CIRCLE.
THAT MISSION ON KI-ALETA COST US DEARLY. MAYBE IT'S FINALLY TIME TO PUT THOSE OLD GHOSTS TO REST.
AND HEY, LOOK, IF YOU CAN'T TRUST ME...
SHOW ONE FACE TO THE WORLD.
HIDE THE OTHER.
...WHO CAN YOU TRUST?
BE AN ISLAND.
LET NO ONE IN.
OKAY. I'LL TAKE YOU TO IT.
GOOD. GOOD. I GENUINELY BELIEVE, HOT ROD, IT'S THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR PROBLEMS!
YEH? NOTHING'S THAT EASY, DEALER...

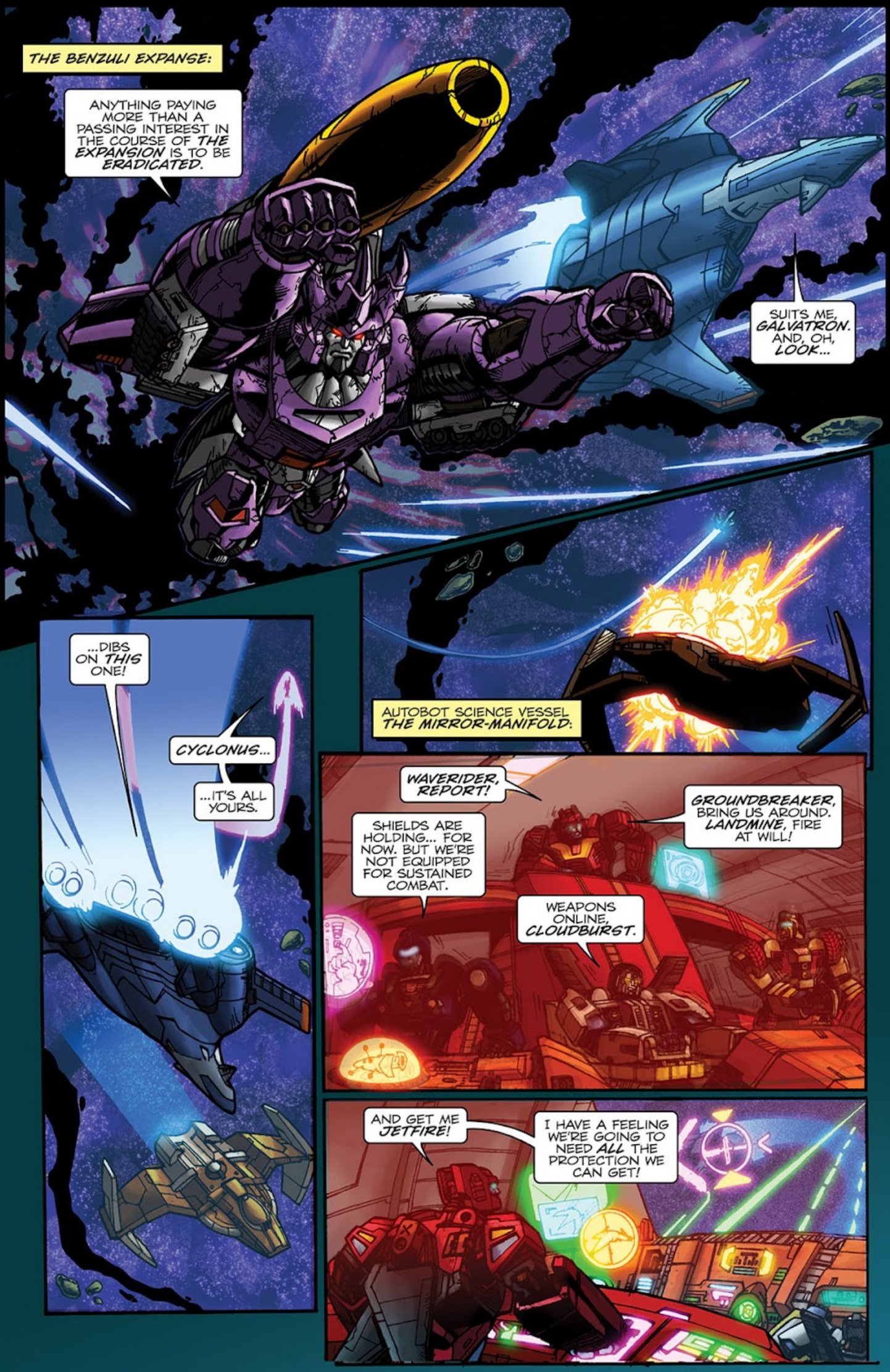
"...THERE'S ALWAYS A PRICE."
LET US BEGIN...

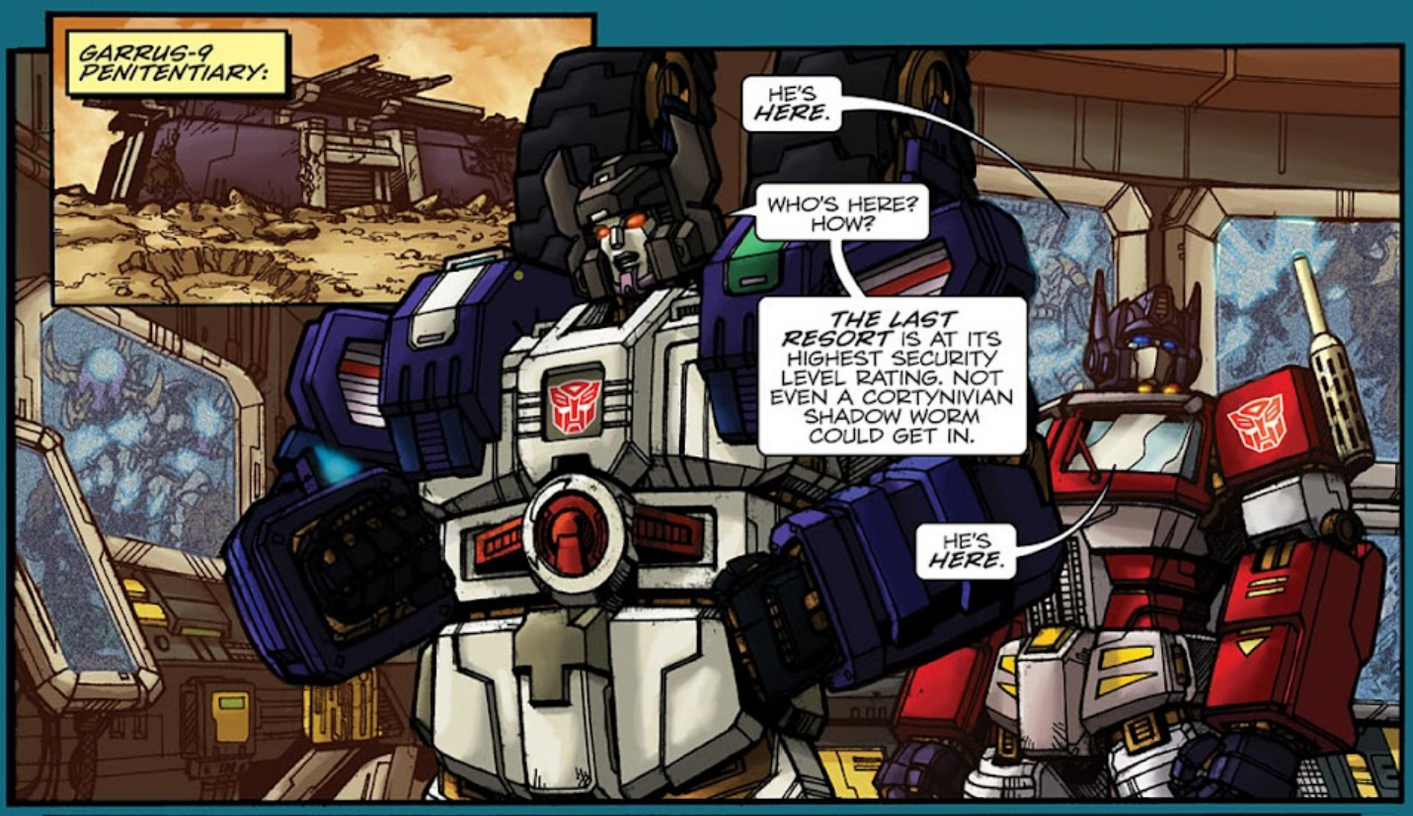
CHINA, JIANGXI PROVINCE:
THTTUMM

STRAXUS, THAT'S ENOUGH. YOU CAN START DRILLING NOW.
THTTUMM

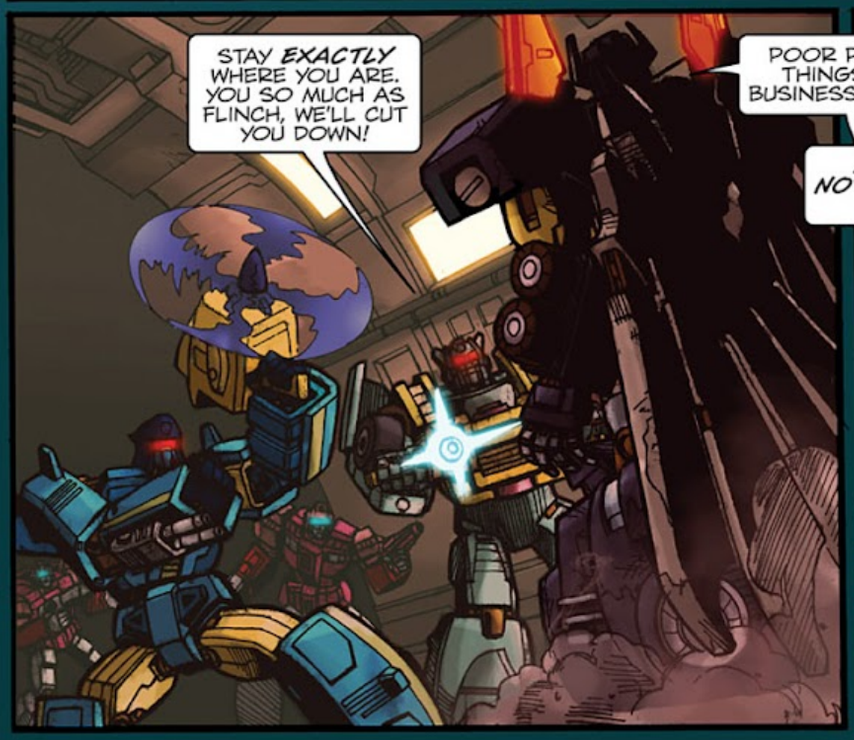

REFRAIN FROM TELLING ME MY BUSINESS, GRINDCORE. I KNOW WHAT NEEDS DOING.
YOU...


...CONCENTRATE ON GETTING THAT SPACE BRIDGE ASSEMBLED. WE'RE ON A STRICT TIMETABLE, REMEMBER?
HOW COULD I FORGET? TWENTY CYCLES AND WE'RE COSMIC DUST. JUST AS WELL, IN TEN...
...IT WON'T MATTER ANY MORE.
INDEED. OUR UNIVERSE AND THIS WILL BLEED INTO ONE. THE PROCESS, THOUGH, REQUIRES ENERGON, LOTS OF IT. AND EARTH...
...IS RICH IN IT.
THANKS, IN NO SMALL PART, TO JHIAXUS' FORMER UNDERSTUDY...
ZRRRR
...SHOCKWAVE.

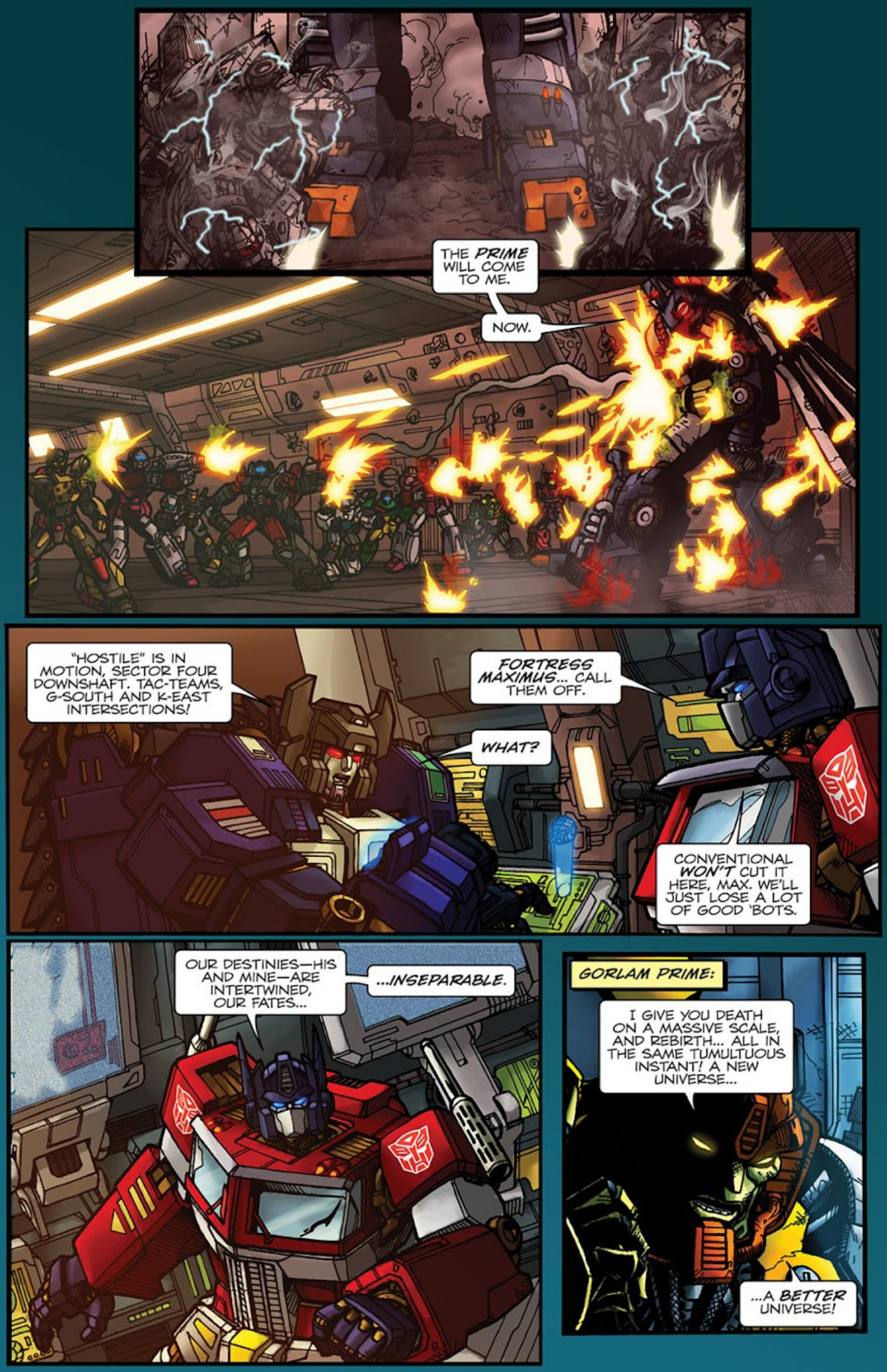

THE BENZULI EXPANSE:
ANYTHING PAYING MORE THAN A PASSING INTEREST IN THE COURSE OF THE EXPANSION IS TO BE ERADICATED.
SUITS ME, GALVATRON. AND, OH, LOOK...
...DIBS ON THIS ONE!
CYCLONUS...
...IT'S ALL YOURS.
AUTOBOT SCIENCE VESSEL THE MIRROR-MANIFOLD:
WAVERIDER, REPORT!
SHIELDS ARE HOLDING... FOR NOW. BUT WE'RE NOT EQUIPPED FOR SUSTAINED COMBAT.
GROUNDBREAKER, BRING US AROUND. LANDMINE, FIRE AT WILL!
WEAPONS ONLINE, CLOUDBURST.
AND GET ME JETFIRE!
I HAVE A FEELING WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE PROTECTION WE CAN GET!


GARRUS-9 PENITENTIARY:
HE'S HERE.
WHO'S HERE? HOW?
THE LAST RESORT IS AT ITS HIGHEST SECURITY LEVEL RATING. NOT EVEN A CORTYNIVIAN SHADOW WORM COULD GET IN.
HE'S HERE.

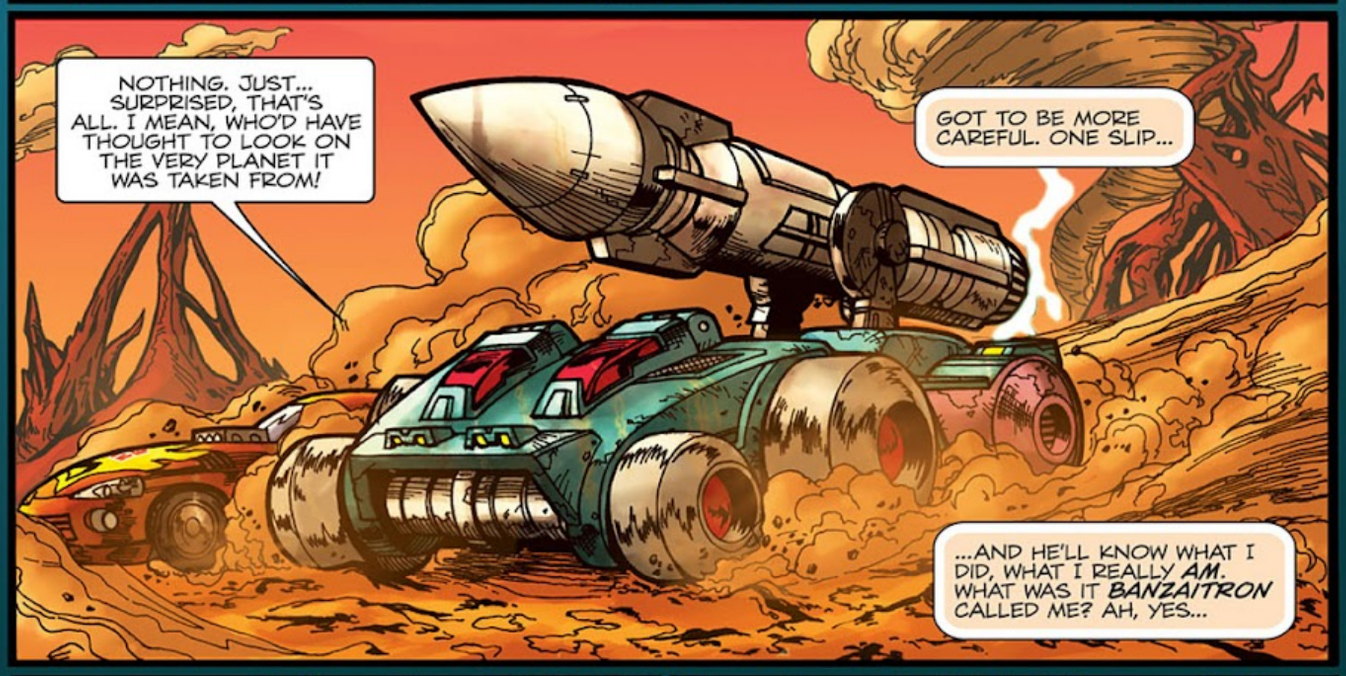
"NOVA PRIME."
DON'T MOVE!


STAY EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE. YOU SO MUCH AS FLINCH, WE'LL CUT YOU DOWN!
POOR PITIFUL THINGS. MY BUSINESS HERE...
...DOES NOT INVOLVE YOU!

-:AK:-
-:HT:-

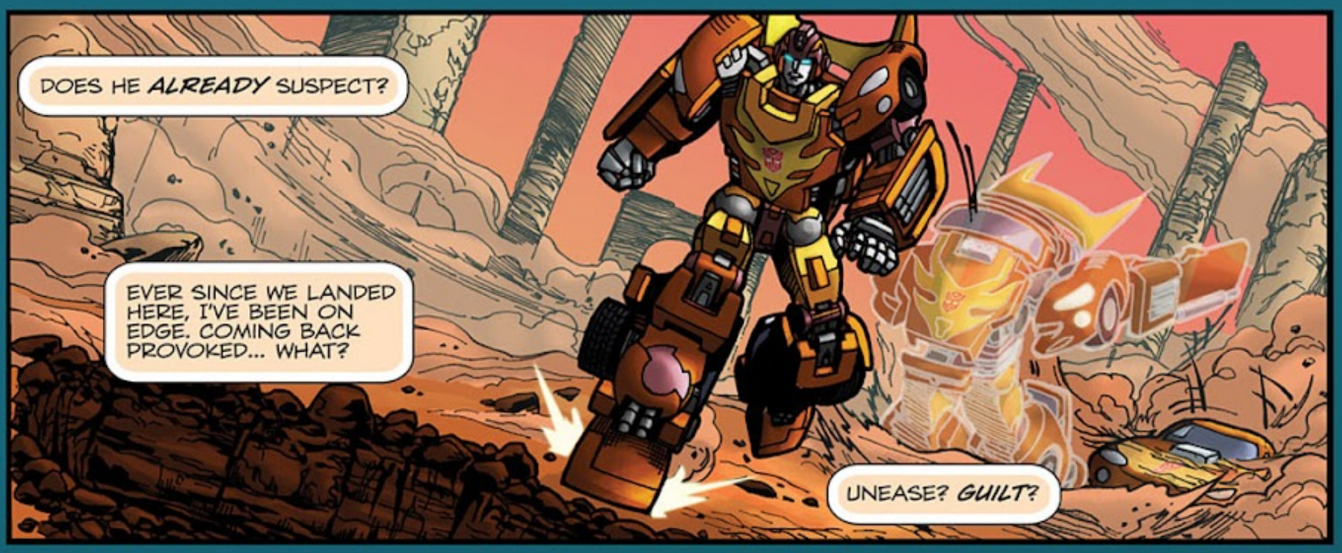

THE PRIME WILL COME TO ME.
NOW.
"HOSTILE" IS IN MOTION, SECTOR FOUR DOWNSHAFT. TAC-TEAMS, G-SOUTH AND K-EAST INTERSECTIONS!
FORTRESS MAXIMUS... CALL THEM OFF.
WHAT?
CONVENTIONAL WON'T CUT IT HERE, MAX. WE'LL JUST LOSE A LOT OF GOOD 'BOTS.
OUR DESTINIES—HIS AND MINE—ARE INTERTWINED, OUR FATES...
...INSEPARABLE.
GORLAM PRIME:
I GIVE YOU DEATH ON A MASSIVE SCALE, AND REBIRTH... ALL IN THE SAME TUMULTUOUS INSTANT! A NEW UNIVERSE...
...A BETTER UNIVERSE!

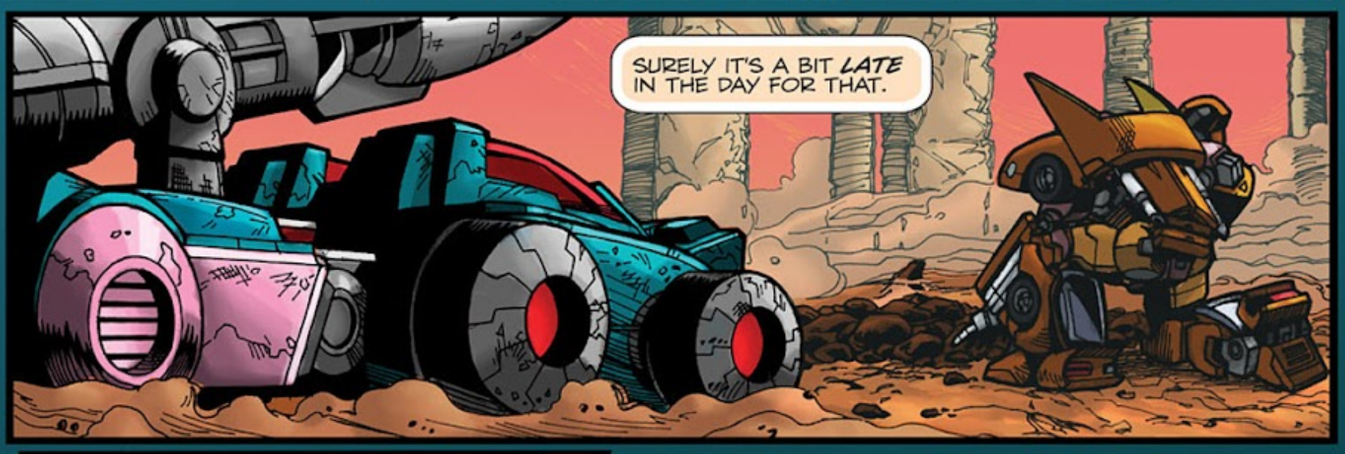
KI-ALETA:
THIS IS WHERE YOU HID IT? HERE?
ALL THIS TIME AND—
WHAT?


NOTHING. JUST... SURPRISED, THAT'S ALL. I MEAN, WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT TO LOOK ON THE VERY PLANET IT WAS TAKEN FROM!
GOT TO BE MORE CAREFUL. ONE SLIP...
...AND HE'LL KNOW WHAT I DID, WHAT I REALLY AM. WHAT WAS IT BANZAITRON CALLED ME? AH, YES...

...DOUBLEDEALER!
IS THIS—?
—IT IS!

THE OMEGA BUNKER.
BUT WHY?


DOES HE ALREADY SUSPECT?
EVER SINCE WE LANDED HERE, I'VE BEEN ON EDGE. COMING BACK PROVOKED... WHAT?
UNEASE? GUILT?


SURELY IT'S A BIT LATE IN THE DAY FOR THAT.

GIZMO, BACKBEAT, DOWNLOAD, INDIRECTLY OR DIRECTLY...

...I KILLED THEM ALL.
I SABOTAGED THE HOLOMATTER GENERATOR THAT KEPT THE OMEGA GUARDIANS AT BAY...

...AND MADE SURE THAT WHEN HOT ROD FINALLY EMERGED FROM THE INNER CHAMBER WITH THE MAGNIFICENCE... IT'D BE MINE!

ONLY, HOT ROD NEVER CAME UP. OR, AT LEAST, NOT WHERE I EXPECTED HE WOULD!
HOT ROD, WE HAVE TO GO.
RIGHT. YEAH. IT'S JUST...

...IT STILL DOESN'T ADD UP! I'VE BEEN OVER IT AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND I DON'T GET HOW IT ALL FELL APART SO SUDDENLY, SO DRASTICALLY. I—

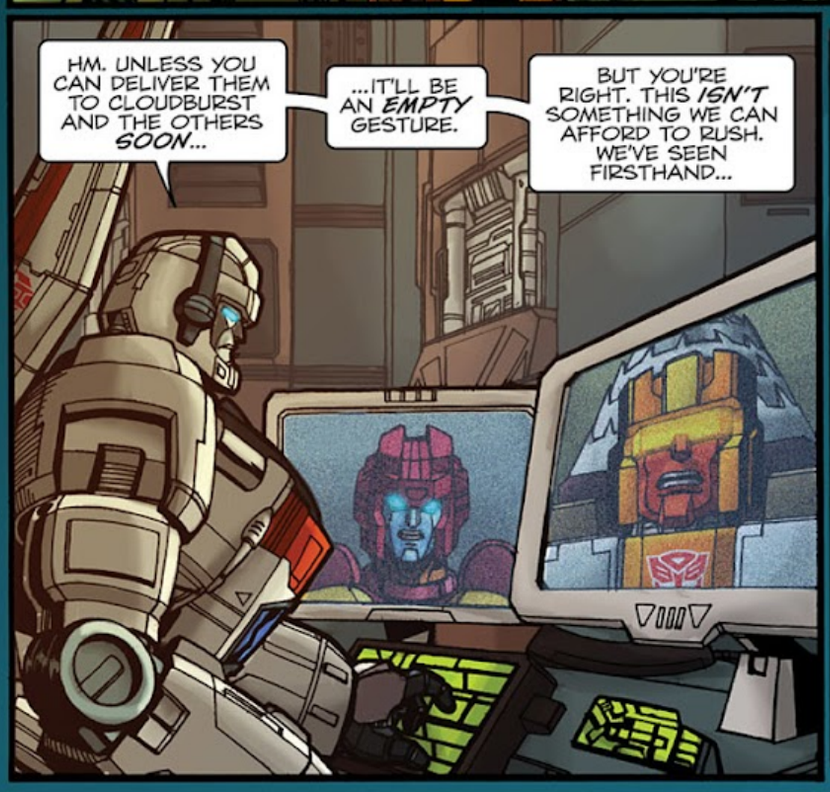
HOT ROD...
...IT ISN'T YOUR FAULT.
I PUT ON MY GAME FACE.

YOU CAN'T KEEP BEATING YOURSELF UP OVER WHAT HAPPENED BACK THEN. HERE, NOW IS WHAT MATTERS.
DON'T LET THEIR SACRIFICE HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING.
I KNOW EXACTLY WHICH BUTTONS TO PRESS.

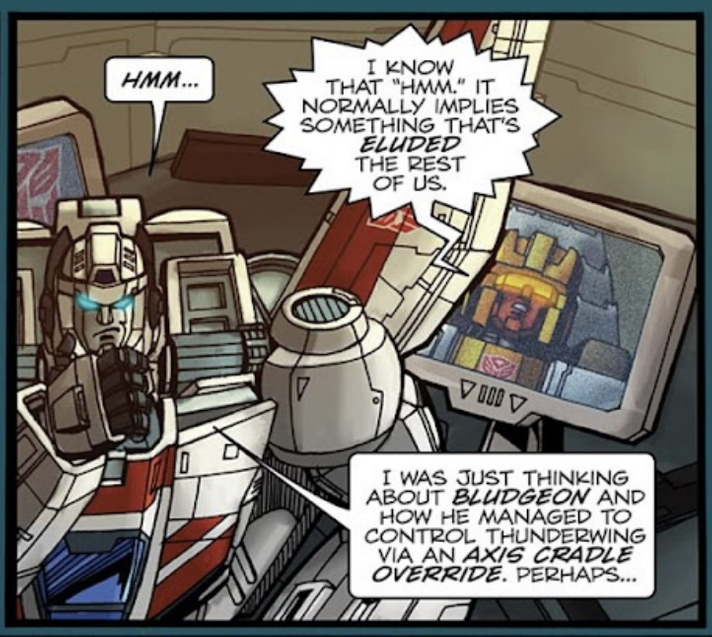
THANKS, DEALER...
IT'S A *TALENT*.
IN THE END, THEY MEAN NOTHING TO ME.
THIS WAY... IT'S NOT FAR.
WAR IS JUST A MEANS TO AN END, FACTION FOR FOOLS, FRIENDSHIP ARTIFICE.
I NEVER FIT IN, NEVER TRIED TO. I WAS SMARTER, BETTER, IN EVERY WAY THEIR INTELLECTUAL SUPERIOR. AND YET...
...I FELT... SOMETHING. ALMOST AS IF ONE OR MORE OF THEM ACTUALLY IMPACTED ON MY WILFULLY STERILE BUBBLE.
A MOMENTARY LAPSE.
EASILY *DEALT* WITH.

AUTOBOT CARGO VESSEL *NIGHTBIRD*, EN ROUTE TO THE BENZULI EXPANSE:
BEST E.T.A. IS *SIX CYCLES*, I'M AFRAID.

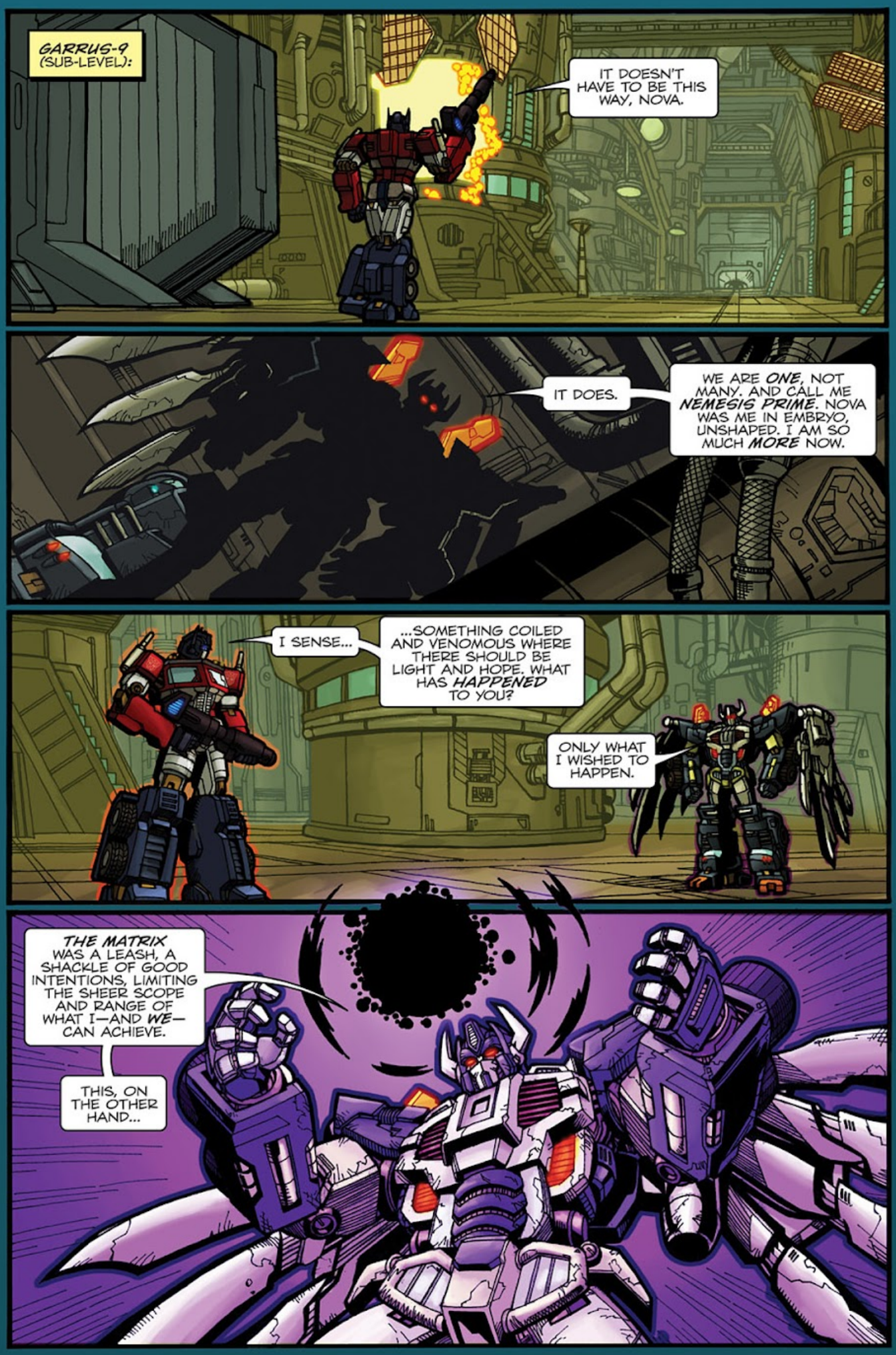
CAN'T YOU GET MORE SPEED OUT OF THAT CRATE, *NOSECONE*?
WE'RE PUSHING THE ENGINES TO THEIR LIMIT AS IT IS, *JETFIRE*. AND ANYWAY, THE CARAPACES AREN'T FULLY MESHED.
I'M ASSUMING YOU *DON'T* WANT US RUSHING THAT.

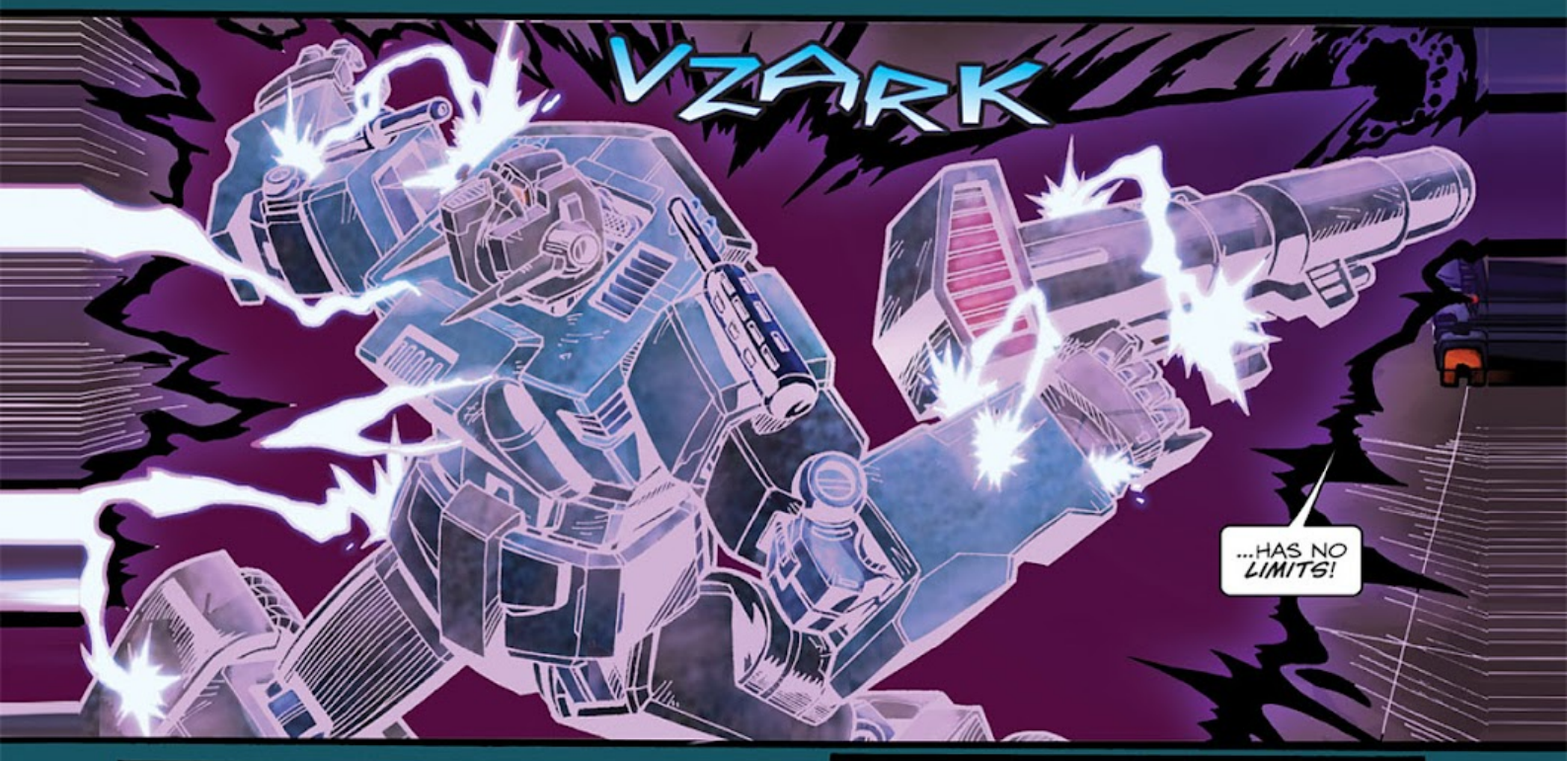

HM. UNLESS YOU CAN DELIVER THEM TO CLOUDBURST AND THE OTHERS *SOON*...
...IT'LL BE AN *EMPTY* GESTURE.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. THIS *ISN'T* SOMETHING WE CAN AFFORD TO RUSH. WE'VE SEEN FIRSTHAND...

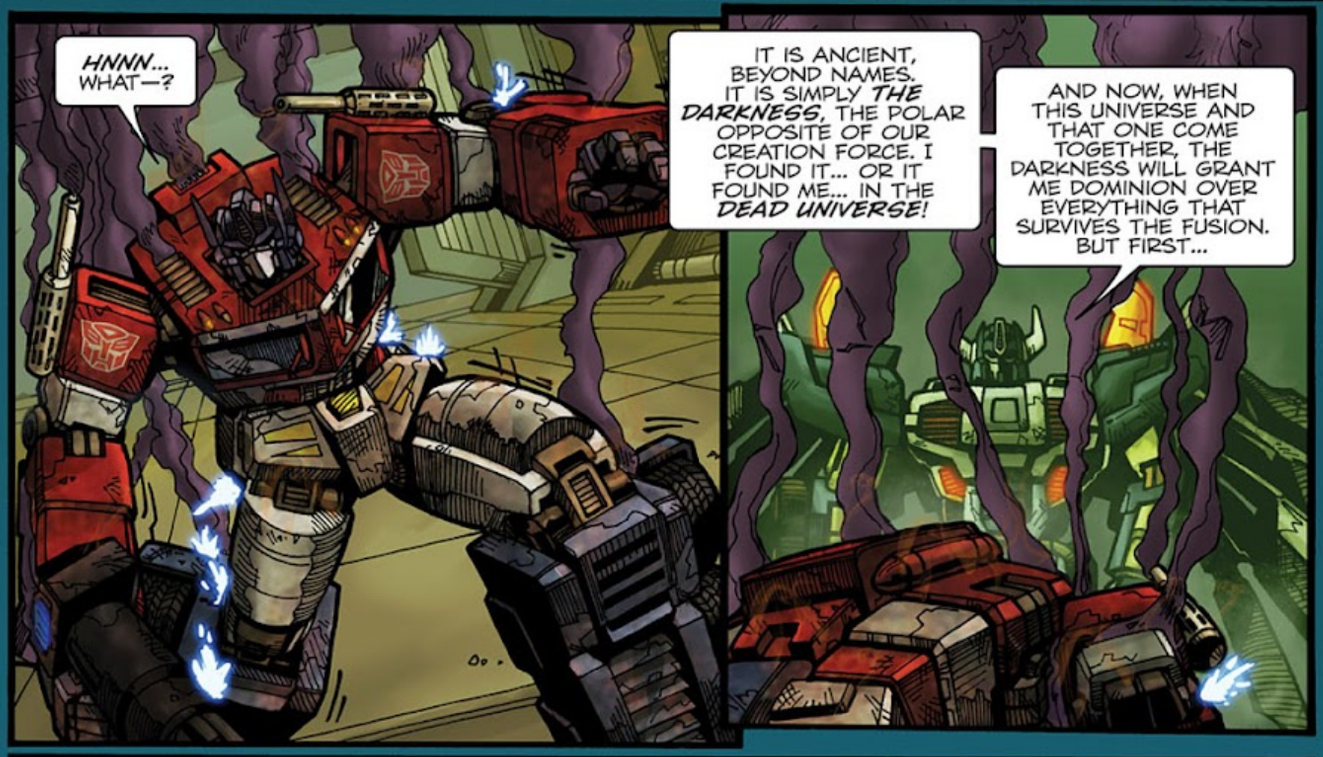
"...JUST HOW *BADLY* THAT PLAYS OUT."

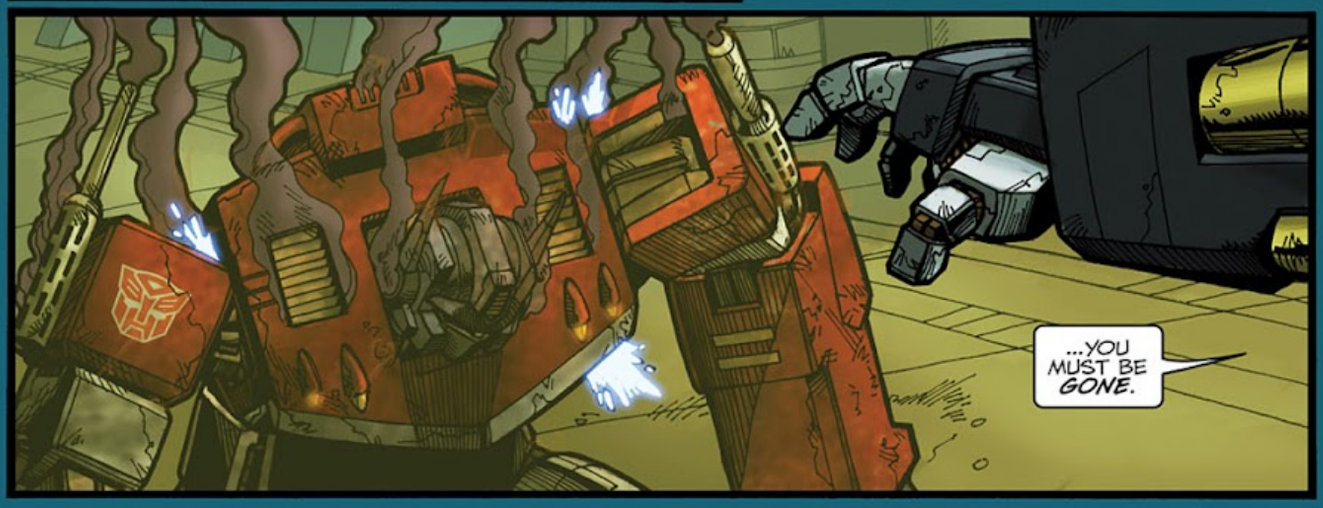


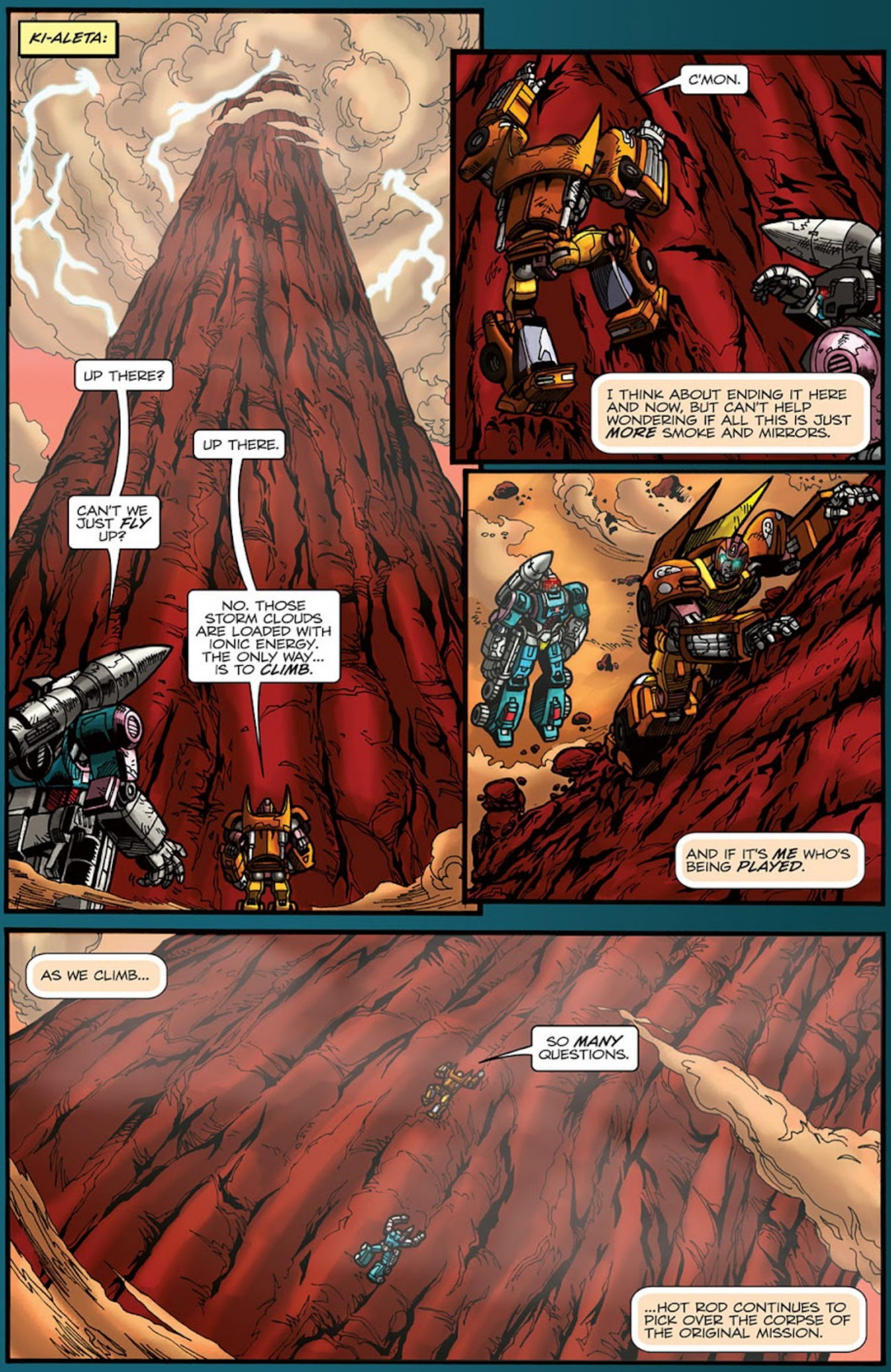
"...WE'VE BEEN GOING ABOUT THIS THE WRONG WAY."

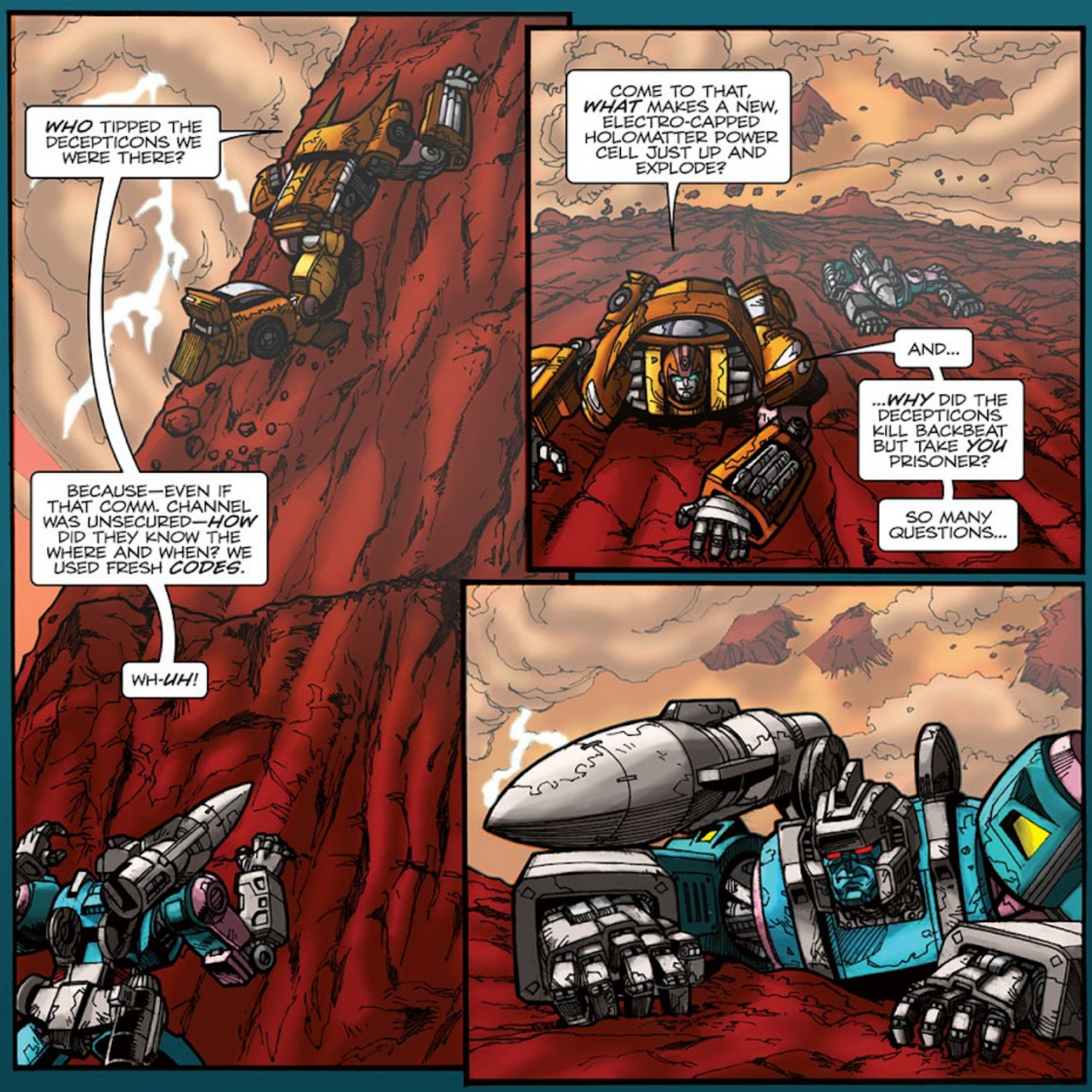

GARRUS-9 (SUB-LEVEL):
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY, NOVA.
IT DOES.
WE ARE ONE, NOT MANY. AND CALL ME NEMESIS PRIME. NOVA WAS ME IN EMBRYO, UNSHAPED. I AM SO MUCH MORE NOW.
I SENSE...
...SOMETHING COILED AND VENOMOUS WHERE THERE SHOULD BE LIGHT AND HOPE. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU?
ONLY WHAT I WISHED TO HAPPEN.
THE MATRIX WAS A LEASH, A SHACKLE OF GOOD INTENTIONS, LIMITING THE SHEER SCOPE AND RANGE OF WHAT I—AND WE—CAN ACHIEVE.
THIS, ON THE OTHER HAND...

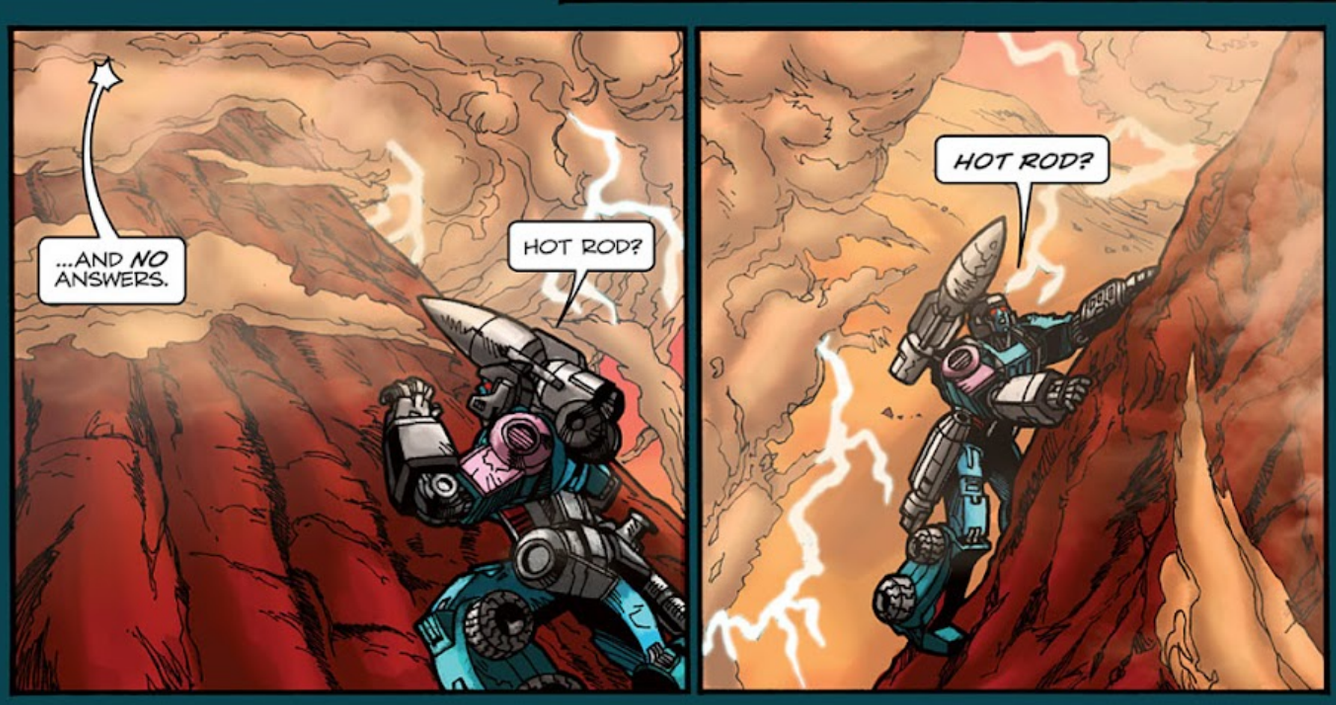

VZARK
...HAS NO LIMITS!

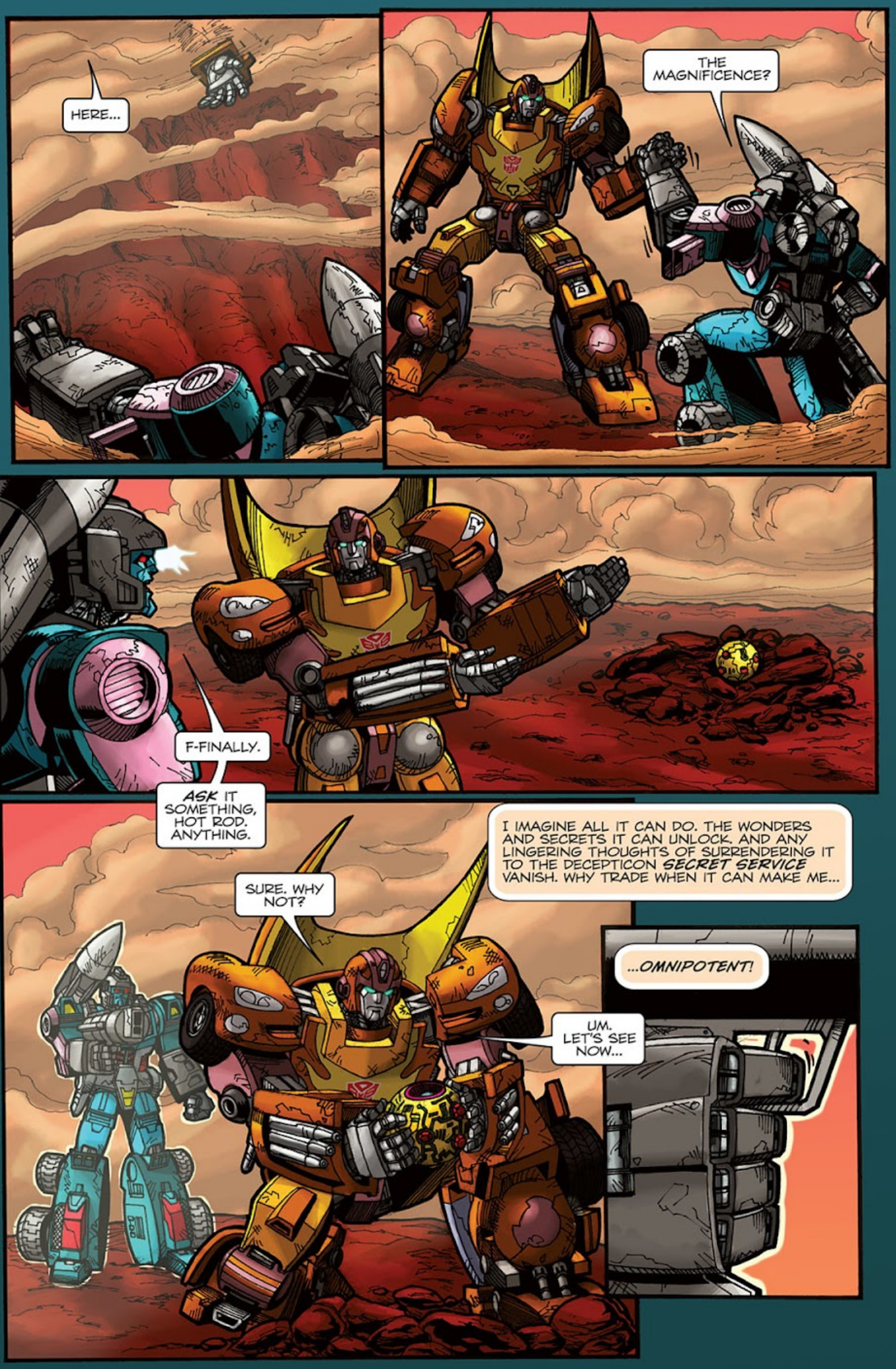

HNNN... WHAT—?
IT IS ANCIENT, BEYOND NAMES. IT IS SIMPLY THE DARKNESS, THE POLAR OPPOSITE OF OUR CREATION FORCE. I FOUND IT... OR IT FOUND ME... IN THE DEAD UNIVERSE!
AND NOW, WHEN THIS UNIVERSE AND THAT ONE COME TOGETHER, THE DARKNESS WILL GRANT ME DOMINION OVER EVERYTHING THAT SURVIVES THE FUSION. BUT FIRST...


...YOU MUST BE GONE.


KI-ALETA:
UP THERE?
CAN'T WE JUST FLY UP?
UP THERE.
NO. THOSE STORM CLOUDS ARE LOADED WITH IONIC ENERGY. THE ONLY WAY... IS TO CLIMB.
C'MON.
I THINK ABOUT ENDING IT HERE AND NOW, BUT CAN'T HELP WONDERING IF ALL THIS IS JUST MORE SMOKE AND MIRRORS.
AND IF IT'S ME WHO'S BEING PLAYED.
AS WE CLIMB...
SO MANY QUESTIONS.
...HOT ROD CONTINUES TO PICK OVER THE CORPSE OF THE ORIGINAL MISSION.


WHO TIPPED THE DECEPTICONS WE WERE THERE?
BECAUSE—EVEN IF THAT COMM. CHANNEL WAS UNSECURED—HOW DID THEY KNOW THE WHERE AND WHEN? WE USED FRESH CODES.
WH-UH!
COME TO THAT, WHAT MAKES A NEW, ELECTRO-CAPPED HOLOMATTER POWER CELL JUST UP AND EXPLODE?
AND...
...WHY DID THE DECEPTICONS KILL BACKBEAT BUT TAKE YOU PRISONER?
SO MANY QUESTIONS...

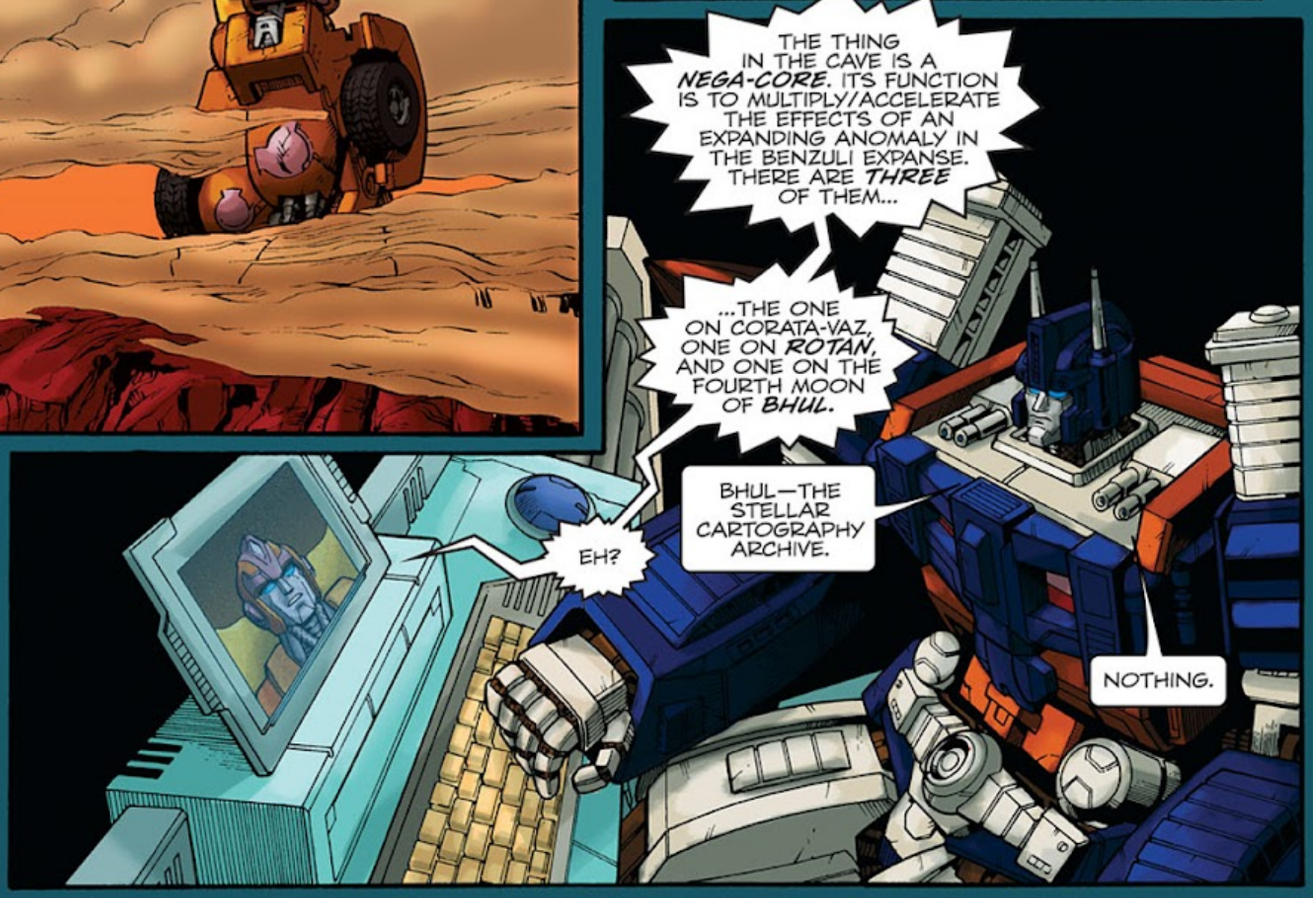

...AND NO ANSWERS.
HOT ROD?
HOT ROD?


HERE...
THE MAGNIFICENCE?
F-FINALLY.
ASK IT SOMETHING, HOT ROD. ANYTHING.
SURE. WHY NOT?
I IMAGINE ALL IT CAN DO. THE WONDERS AND SECRETS IT CAN UNLOCK. AND ANY LINGERING THOUGHTS OF SURRENDERING IT TO THE DECEPTICON SECRET SERVICE VANISH. WHY TRADE WHEN IT CAN MAKE ME...
...OMNIPOTENT!
UM. LET'S SEE NOW...

BE AN ISLAND.
LET NO ONE IN.
...DID DEALER BETRAY US?
YES!
CHOW
VAAP
VAAP
OWKK!
AAAAAAA
SPRAAKT

TAKE EMOTION OUT OF THE EQUATION...
... AND THE ANSWER WAS STARING ME IN THE FACE ALL THE TIME.

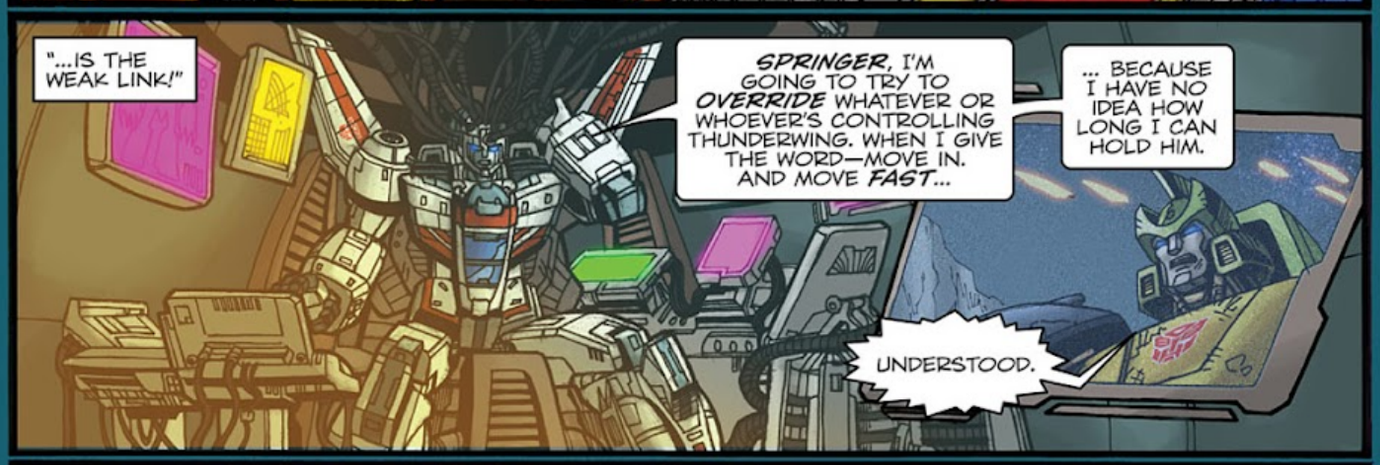
EVERYTHING?
EVERYTHING, ULTRA MAGNUS.


THE THING IN THE CAVE IS A NEGA-CORE. ITS FUNCTION IS TO MULTIPLY/ACCELERATE THE EFFECTS OF AN EXPANDING ANOMALY IN THE BENZULI EXPANSE. THERE ARE THREE OF THEM...
...THE ONE ON CORATA-VAZ, ONE ON ROTAN, AND ONE ON THE FOURTH MOON OF BHUL.
BHUL—THE STELLAR CARTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE.
EH?
NOTHING.

"RIGHT. WELL, EACH HAS THEIR OWN GUARDIAN—THUNDERWING, MONSTRUCTOR, AND SIXSHOT.

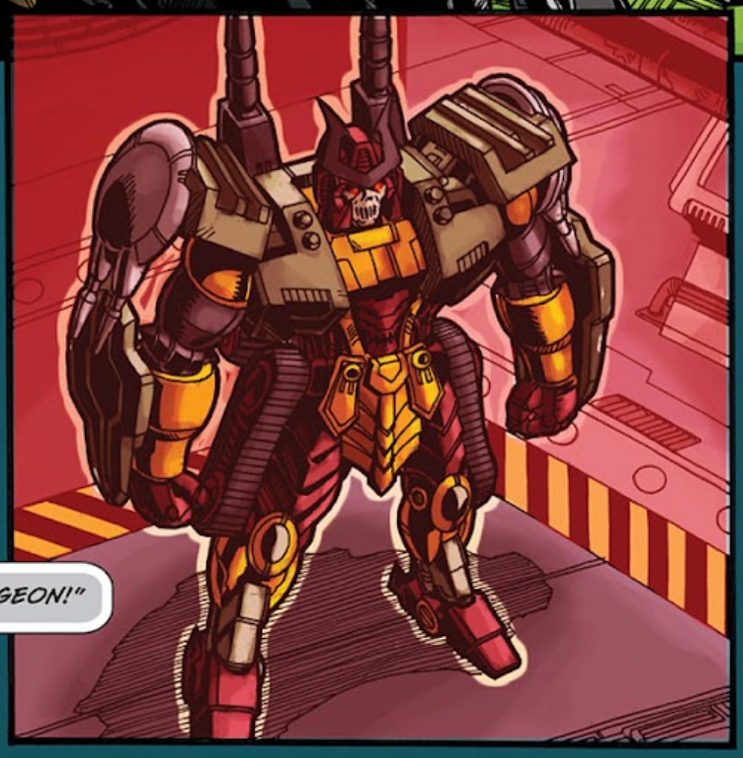
"AND EACH GUARDIAN HAS A NEURAL IMPLANT, EFFECTIVELY MAKING THEM SLAVES TO JHIAXUS' WILL. GETTING AT THE CORES WON'T BE EASY!"

THERE'S ACTIVITY ON EARTH TOO. THAT'S WHERE THEIR POWER SUPPLY IS.
OH, AND THE WHOLE SET-UP IS LINKED VIA MULTIPLE SPACE BRIDGE PORTALS TO A HUB ON GORLAM PRIME.
GOOD WORK, HOT ROD. NOW ALL WE HAVE TO FIND...


"...IS THE WEAK LINK!"
SPRINGER, I'M GOING TO TRY TO OVERRIDE WHATEVER OR WHOEVER'S CONTROLLING THUNDERWING. WHEN I GIVE THE WORD—MOVE IN. AND MOVE FAST...
... BECAUSE I HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG I CAN HOLD HIM.
UNDERSTOOD.

GORLAM PRIME:
NO. THAT WON'T DO AT ALL.
IT'S AS WELL I SAW FIT TO KEEP A RESERVE IN MIND, AS IT WERE, SHOULD A BACK-UP GUARDIAN BE NEEDED.

"ARISE...
"...BLUDGEON!"



THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT DOUBLEDEALER

REVELATION: PART THREE

CVR RI